

● PM optimistic ● Analysts: Swing in favour of Barisan

BN confident of getting two-thirds

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — As the 10-day campaigning, described as one of the keenest in the history of the country's general elections, drew to a close at midnight tonight, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed optimism that the Barisan Nasional would retain its two-thirds majority.

Winding up his whirlwind nationwide campaign in his Kubang Pasu parliamentary constituency, Dr Mahathir said the

were visibly annoyed by the last minute shift by the PBS and the incident surrounding Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's visit to Sabah and Sarawak, the non-Malays were more influenced by the good run that the economy had been having since 1987.

The Opposition leaders, on the other hand, were banking on their various pacts and radical promises to draw away enough voters to their side in order to deprive the BN of victory.

The foreign newspapers and international news agencies, which are not normally sympathetic to a long-reigning party like the BN, had been predicting victory for the Government, some giving it a better than average chance of retaining the two-thirds majority.

final assessment showed that the BN was capable of the feat.

He urged the country's 7.96 million registered voters to come out in full force tomorrow to give a strong mandate to the BN so that it would be able to continue to ensure a peaceful, stable and prosperous Malaysia.

However, the Opposition leaders too are confident that the voters would heed their "Save Malaysia" plea and give them the first victory.

Analysts said the odds had swung in favour of the BN in the past few days of the campaign, especially after the abrupt withdrawal of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) from the Barisan on Monday to join the Semangat 46-led Opposition.

They said there was definitely a strong rally behind the BN by the Malays while the non-Malays, fearing that the incident might lead to trouble, seemed to give the call for a strong Government more serious consideration.

They backed this argument by pointing to the various statements of support and pledges in favour of the BN by Chinese associations and guilds, and the good turnout at BN *ceramah* in the non-Malay areas.

They said while the Malay voters

The *Financial Times of London*, in a special report on the Malaysian election, said: "He (Dr Mahathir) has the grounds to be confident: the country has had a good three-year run of economic growth and relatively low inflation rates. Most people, even among some of his opponents, are expecting victory for the Barisan."

The *Asian Wall Street Journal* adds: "Growing prosperity and near double-digit rates of economic expansion bode well for Dr Mahathir. His plans...for Malaysia to leap-frog into the ranks of newly industrialised countries on the back of his heavy-industry policy appear to be paying off..."

The *Journal* also noted: "The Opposition's stated goal is to defeat Dr Mahathir's National Front and form an alternative Government. Independent political analysts say that won't happen."

However, the Hong Kong-based publication adds: "All is not well among the opposition parties. Besides being outmanned and outfunded by the National Front, their ranks

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Party workers thanked for hard work

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have been chipped away by defections."

The Singapore *Business Times*, in an editorial headlined "Mandate has to be decisive", said while the Opposition had rehashed old charges of economic mismanagement, financial scandals and curbs on democracy, the Government had the proof of an economy on a fast track with the country strongly tipped to become the latest "tiger" among the aggressive Asian economies.

Speaking to reporters in Jitra after visiting 14 BN election operations centres in the Kubang Pasu constituency, Dr Mahathir stressed that the BN could retain the Kelantan Government despite a slight problem caused by "an extraordinary problem". He, however, declined to disclose what the problem was.

Dr Mahathir said he felt confident of the victory because the BN election machinery had been working at full capacity during the campaign period.

The Prime Minister, who is also BN chairman, said many Pas members and supporters might not vote for Semangat 46 candidates as they felt cheated by Semangat 46 whose struggle was not in line with that of Pas despite being in the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (APU).

He thanked party workers and supporters for their hard work and sacrifices during the campaigning.